

Getting the most out of reading and lectures

There will be a lot of material to read during your course and you may find this overwhelming. Here are some suggestions that may help:

Selective reading

- discuss your booklist with your tutors- ask them which books are the most relevant and why
- ask more experienced students which books they have found helpful
- share out reading with two or three other students and report to each other regularly on what is worthwhile
- use the index and contents to see if the material is relevant
- check the date of publication and identify the author
- note which books and papers are regularly mentioned in other books as important

SQ3R- A formula for active reading

Survey, Question, Read, Recall, Review is a strategy to help you read more productively.

Survey- you will absorb more information if you are aware what is to follow

look at the whole book, chapter, article or section to get a sense of what it is about

look for visual signposts to find your way around the text eg bold print, sub headings, illustrations and diagrams

look for verbal signposts to get to the main argument eg phrases like 'The prime example of' or 'In conclusion'

Question

make links with the material you know already

decide whether it is relevant to your research

decide how much you need to read

Read

divide the section of text into small chunks and read in detail for about 20 minutes, vary reading speed

read with a purpose e.g. take the assignment question to the text

look for important details and evidence to support the main argument within each paragraph

try to identify the sentence which sums up the key idea

try to evaluate the text by comparing its ideas with what you already know or have read elsewhere

try to distinguish between fact and opinion

Recall

after you have read a section --- stop

try to remember any important points

write these down- see the section on note-taking for ideas about how to go about this

Review

reflect on whether you have answered the questions you took to the text

check the section for important points and detail

complete your recall by filling in any gaps in your notes